

Skagit Transit Community Advisory Committee
February 9, 2021 Minutes

LIST OF ATTENDEES

Members

Chair Judy Jones
Vice Chair Chris Jones
Special Projects Assistant Joe A. Kunzler
Doris Brevoort
Valerie Rose
Dick Phillips?

Louise Edens
Robyn Gosney
Anthony Whitesides
Craig Edens

Staff

Planner Brad Windler
Marketing & Public Affairs Cheryl Willis

Guests

Skagit Transit Board member Ron Wesen
WSF Senior Planning Manager
Ray Deardorf

Roll was called by Cheryl Willis. Dave Stevens was not there.

No public comment was offered.

Chair Jones then asked for Zoom discipline such as muting when not speaking – ALT-A or *6 to mute & un-mute.

Meeting minutes for January 2021 were discussed and Joe Kunzler was praised. Vice Chair Chris Jones moved to approve, Valerie Rose seconded.

The guest speaker, Washington State Ferries' (WSF's) Planner Ray Deardorf was then recognized. Planner Deardorf appreciated being invited to the CAC to discuss the circa 2019 [WSF long range plan](#) intended to reach to 2040 and WSF's "Covid response" plus "transit connections". Planner Deardorf then

explained that WSF has 21 vessels of various sizes & ages, and more space in the fleet for passengers than vehicles.

The problem is that 1999's I-695 cut in car tabs/MVET meant WSF had to double fares, which led to lost ridership. WSF was also impacted by the 2008-2011 Great Recession. Deardorf made clear, "Events have overtaken plans, as they often do".

That said, Deardorf said WSF did an immense amount of outreach through various means. WSF did get back in return input that riders wanted reliable service, WSF to implement new technologies, WSF to "encourage multimodal transportation" via better transit connections, and "Increase ferry system capacity".

As a result, WSF concluded they must invest in sixteen new vessels by 2040, acquire & use new tech and electrify the fleet "to reduce fuel use, emissions, and noise and maintenance costs".

As to reliable service, WSF needs to build new vessels to support fleet maintenance and service needs. Deardorf said that fleet compositions is, "To keep us more or less even".

As to customer experience priorities included better trip planning, better wayfinding, improve pedestrian + bike + transit connections, and address parking issues to encourage walk-on passengers. Increasing system capacity would also be helpful. Deardorf noted the need for environmentally friendly vessels and terminals.

Deardorf did then pivot to the Anacortes-San Juans-Sidney ferry runs. One recommendation was to make a two season schedule instead of the current four. Deardorf said the current four season schedule, "Makes it very hard for our transit partners to connect with us. If we reduce the number of schedule changes a year;" it makes it easier for connections. Deardorf then explained that the Anacortes Ferry Terminal and some of the San Juan terminals needed renovation or replacement with better facilities for the ferries.

Moving to the Port Townsend-Coupeville run, a ferry run with the Coupeville terminal served by Island Transit; Deardorf said that WSF planned on

electrifying the terminal and the ferries by the early 2030s. Plus that the second ferry on that route should be serving longer.

Deardorf then pivoted over to the costs of running WSF and getting on with implementing WSF's plans. Things are well underway, but there is a funding gap between WSF's plans and available cash.

Deardorf then pivoted over to discussing the impacts of Covid19 on WSF. Dropped down to 1950s levels in March-April 2020, "lost more passengers than we have vehicles" – but recovered to 25% of walk-ons, 80% of vehicles. WSF decided to "downsize" routes and stick to the winter schedule in the San Juans, and then start "adding back service" while WSF expects to eventually recover. San Juans seeing the recovery.

However lack of crewing/manpower the ferries are running on winter schedule deep into 2021. This will make 2021 a *de facto* trial run of the two season schedule in the San Juans.

The question period then began. Chair Judy Jones reminded everyone to unmute and then Joe A. Kunzler lobbed the first question. Joe shared screen, showing a panorama of a 14 February 2019 Puget Sound Regional Council/PSRC meeting where then-WSF Secretary Amy Scarton presented. "The more we can partner together", door-to-door is better for all. Kunzler stressed that Skagit Transit is not as resourced as King County Metro and other large transits noting that it's important to, "Keep in mind that... we're not able to meet every single ferry at the dock. ... We're just a little transit agency that needs some help."

Deardorf said, "We could work with Skagit Transit" as to arrival times "to make key connections" and potential markets for public transit. Long-range plan is focused on recruiting walk-on passengers due to very limited vehicle capacity in the WSF fleet.

Valerie Rose and then Robyn Gosney pointed out that considering the constraints on WSF if WSF could encourage hotels, resorts and such to use vans to pickup customers. Doris Brevoort suggested on-demand transit be used because WSF has problems with being on-time.

Brad Windler asked about fare specials for WSF passengers. Deardorf mentioned the ability to go half-off, but that the Washington State Transportation Commission sets the fares. Commission has been supportive of a policy to favor walk-on pedestrians.

Joe Kunzler then asked about ORCA Next Gen acceptance in the San Juan Islands versus the Central Puget Sound. Deardorf said only Central Puget Sound, and then asked about Skagit Transit fare policy. Windler explained Skagit Transit's fare policy – including for paratransit and during Covid19.

Deardorf also asked if Skagit Transit was part of ORCA. Windler explained that instead Skagit Transit is partnering with Whatcom Transportation Authority for electronic fare collection.

Kunzler then explained that his earlier question was about getting more seamless fare policy throughout all of the Puget Sound. Kunzler then went on to put Department of Vocational Rehabilitation/DVR guy Anthony Whitesides on the spot about finding jobs for his clients. Anthony expressed interested to WSF about linking jobs to DVR clients, and Deardorf was grateful + gave out his e-mail address. Chair Judy Jones spoke about how fun it was to “foster connections” and then thanked Ray Deardorf for coming.

The meeting then discussed Skagit Transit's MyRide. Brad Windler explained MyRide was “moving along” with a delivered Kiosk, and another coming in early March. Windler also wanted people to volunteer to test out NextRide. Chair Judy Jones asked about infotainment and Windler explained the kiosk will bring up info on routes, maps, real-time information, and a video promoting the Umo app.

Robyn Gosney worried about technology adoption like the Umo app becoming mandatory. Windler explained that the old school ways of paying fare and such would remain congruent to the electronic efforts.

The committee then pivoted to discuss TouchPass being rebranded to Umo. Windler explained that the new apps are online, and the advertising will roll out after ample beta testing. The new Umo app will allow bus stop photos be

the icon to help wayfinding. Kunzler responded this will be helpful for wayfinding and also help show the “sad state of some of our bus stops”.

Next topic was a Stuff the Bus effort. Cheryl Willis briefed the Stuff the Bus effort was February 27th, a Saturday, to help the Helping Hands Food bank with a bus parked at the Cascade Mall parking lot to donate nonperishable foods. All to benefit the Helping Hands Foodbank, during the time of year when they need to be restocked, “With a big need right now”. Chair Judy Jones asked about promotion and Willis explained the cities do help get the word out. Then Valerie Rose asked about location – and Willis explained the event will be near the former JC Penny’s and Johnny Carino’s. Rose then asked about what items – and Willis explained this is for “all populations” so “canned items, those sort of things” can donate. Skagit Transit is still doing deliveries for Helping Hands. Chair Judy Jones commended the project to conclude the discussion.

CAC Roundtable began with Chair Judy Jones wanting the members to think about meeting in the summer. Chair Jones stressed that staff do not get a summer break, but would be happy to give excused absences to CAC members for family.

Louise Edens was very happy with the speaker as she lives in Anacortes. Will share the news from the presentation.

Robin Gosney asked about the new bus stops. Brad Windler said the new signs are due in March.

Anthony Whitesides is putting out the info about Skagit Transit to his DVR colleagues, but haven't got a response yet.

Joe Kunzler endorsed the Chair’s idea of meeting during the summer. Kunzler wanted to follow up on Doris Brevoort’s recommendations for the future of 90X to LynnwoodLink and create a focus group on 90X future to Doris & Valerie. Kunzler explained that some will want to go to Lynnwood direct to get on the Link light rail to Seattle and some will want still have a downtown Everett stop. Valerie Rose wants to think about it and Doris Brevoort wants more thought as to how to implement the future of 90X. One

idea of Brevoort is to alternate between terminating at Everett Station and a Sound Transit Link station. Kunzler said that Skagit Transit needs to be ready to provide input when Community Transit has their strategic plan. Chair Jones wanted to, “keep it in the radar” and, “Having the discussion later in the spring” with reporting out to the CAC afterward as things progressed. The Chair’s idea had general CAC support.

Chair Judy Jones floated the proposal of “A Zoom workshop” with Anna Zivarts of Disability Rights Washington. Chair Jones then asked about if staff or CAC members should take the lead. Brad Windler reported back that Skagit Transit staff has a full year ahead and cannot “sponsor or coordinate it” but “no objection of members” participating in the event. Windler explained that one staff member can be present, but Skagit Transit has UMO Transition + MyRide + bathroom facility for Sedro-Woolley Park & Ride projects all due end of February. Kunzler reminded the CAC that the bathroom is for transit operator relief and for Skagit Transit to be able to give Sedro-Woolley better bus service.

Chair Jones then explained the Disability Mobility Initiative is working for sustainable funding for transit and more. Zivarts has built a story map and will give a talk hopefully in April.

Robin Gosney then asked about a crosswalk at the Sedro-Woolley Park & Ride. Brad Windler and Joe Kunzler explained the pedestrian crossings near the Sedro-Woolley Park & Ride. Gosney then commented about how safe it would be for folks to walk.

Finally, the Chair wanted a motion to adjourn. Valerie Rose presented a motion to adjourn, seconded by Vice Chair Chris Jones. Passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted and Approved on ___ March 2021,

Joe A. Kunzler
Special Projects Manager